



The APPLE schools assistance program

Improving chemical management in schools



The **APPLE (Academic Pollution Prevention – Learning from Experience)** project is an assistance, education, and financial aid package available to qualified Massachusetts applicants to help them identify and address various chemical management concerns. The project pairs schools with local partners in an effort to increase awareness and understanding of the environmental and health concerns posed by chemical use, storage and disposal. APPLE also provides participants with the information necessary to address existing concerns and prevent similar problems from occurring in the future. Both the schools and the partners receive funding to support their efforts.

The project is managed by the **Massachusetts Office of Technical Assistance (OTA)**, a non-regulatory branch of the Commonwealth's Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. OTA provides free, confidential assistance to users of toxics through services ranging from on-site technical assistance visits to special programs like APPLE. OTA's primary mission is to promote toxics use reduction and pollution prevention to manufacturers, consumers, municipalities, and schools. Funding for the APPLE project comes from the **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region One office**, with the goal of providing technical assistance to help public schools manage their chemical use.

Scope and Purpose

This grant program seeks to educate not only schools but also local agencies and organizations in how to properly manage chemicals in public schools. Establishing these partnerships helps ensure that schools – already burdened with budgetary and educational concerns – will be able to call on local support to assist them with the important task of safely managing their hazardous materials and waste. The ultimate goal of the APPLE project is to educate personnel, but also to help initiate a local technical assistance infrastructure for schools.

Each qualifying partner-school team receives on-site training and technical assistance to help them understand and identify potential chemical management problems. This will include:

- a training on chemical management and other environmental, health & safety issues at schools,
- a walk-through of the school,
- assistance with developing an initial inventory of chemicals stored and used, and
- guidance on implementing an environmental management program designed to reduce or eliminate sources of chemical risk now and in the future.

Part of this grant provides seed money for partnering agencies/organizations and schools to begin a program of sound chemical management from purchasing through disposal. A total of \$10,000 is available for distribution among partners and schools across the state. Each partner is eligible for up to \$500 in seed money, and schools are eligible for up to \$1000.

The APPLE program includes initial training workshops held for representatives from the APPLE teams on March 1 and March 10 in Wilmington and Springfield, respectively. The training emphasizes the safe and effective identification and disposal of dangerous, expired or waste chemicals, as well as management and purchasing practices designed to avoid chemical storage and disposal problems in the future. Valuable tools, such as Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) and chemical inventory/management software are also discussed.

Following the training, APPLE teams set up on-site reviews by OTA at one of their schools. These reviews help reinforce the guidance provided to the teams at the workshops in a more “hands-on” setting. Following the on-site review, each APPLE team should be prepared to carry out their own chemical inventories, plan necessary clean-out efforts, and implement changes to existing chemical management practices as needed.

By January 1, 2001, each of the six APPLE teams are required to conduct a detailed inventory of chemicals stored throughout the schools involved and develop a list of all chemicals to be disposed. Within two months of completing the APPLE project, each team must also submit a report to OTA outlining the following information:

- how the school(s) developed chemical inventories (staff involved, the process, whether they chose to utilize CHEMIS or some other type of electronic inventory system, etc.);
- how much hazardous waste (if any) did the school dispose or allocate for disposal as a result of the inventory (a list of wastes and respective volumes is preferred); and
- what purchasing changes and/or pollution prevention measures were incorporated into the school(s) chemical management procedures (if there is any experience with implementation, or other lessons learned, such information would also be appreciated).

Following receipt of these reports, OTA will compile a final report that will include data provided by the APPLE teams, including the volume and character of hazardous materials and waste were removed from the schools involved. OTA will also provide additional qualitative information concerning the performance of the program, and recommendations for how the program may be replicated in other regions or sectors.

For more information about the APPLE program, contact Stephen George at (617) 626-1094 or at stephen.george@state.ma.us.